(b) if so, to what extent his Ministry been able to put this point across to the international community; and

(c) if not, the reasons behind his Ministry's official giving such explanatory statements to the media about the Pakistani missile testing when they could actually build more pressure on Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) India has consistently shared its concern with the international community about deterioration in its security environment caused by Pakistan's acquisition of ballistic missiles and the clandestine linkages of Pakistan's missile programme. Recent ballistic missile tests by Pakistan were adversely commented upon by many countries. These tests may have been motivated *inter-alia* by domestic electoral compulsions.

(c) Does not arise.

Steps to stop attack on minorities

280. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news report captioned "Centre not doing enough to stop attack on minorities: US Report" appearing in The Hindu dated 8th October, 2002;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps, if any, proposed in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) Yes. The State Department brings out a report annually on "International Religious Freedom", as mandated by the U.S. Congress.

(b) and (c) Government considers the U.S. State Department's 2002 Report on International Religious Freedom part of the internal process of a foreign government. Government rejects any intrusive exercise into how we conduct our affairs. The Constitution of India guarantees religious freedom to all its citizens reflecting the well-known social traditions in India of tolerance and respect for all religions.